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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT

New Delhi, the 16th April 1947

RESOLUTION

No. 19-P(46)/46.—The Governor-General-in-Council in agreement with the Governments of maritime Provinces issued a resolution, War Transport Department No. 19-P(94)/44, dated the 16th January, 1946, constituting an expert committee known as the Ports (Technical) Committee with the following terms of reference:—

- (a) whether a sheltered deep-sea port on the East coast of India for the accommodation of ships of large size and tonnage at all seasons of the year is required, whether construction is feasible and if so where; also what measures are necessary for establishing it;
- (b) whether there is justification for the conversion of any minor ports on the coast of India to major ports, if so, whether such conversion is practicable; also whether there are any other projects for construction of major ports which ought to be considered;
- (c) what steps are necessary to develop minor ports in order to meet probable demands of coastal shipping traffic.

The members of the committee were as follows:—

- (1) Sir Godfrey Armstrong, O.B.E., War Transport Department, Government of India, Chairman.
- (2) L. W. Balcombe, Esquire, Chairman, Calcutta Liners Conference.
- (3) M. A. Master, Esquire, Scindia Steam Navigation Company, Bombay.
- (4) D. P. Khaitan, Esquire, nominated by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
- (5) M. H. Gazdar, Esquire, nominated by the Federation of Muslim Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
- (6) J. R. Galloway, Esquire, nominated by the Associated Chambers of Commerce.
- (7) A. Webster Esquire C.I.E. Chief Engineer, Calcutta Port Commissioners.

The committee held several meetings, consulted representatives of Provincial Governments and of the Indian States concerned, visited various ports on the coast of India and signed a unanimous report on the 7th of May 1946 which has already been published. The Government of India have carefully considered the recommendations made in the report and wish to make the following observations on them. The references below are to the recommendations of the committee as summarised in paragraph 82 of the printed report.

(1) The committee expressed the opinion that the following broad considerations should govern the formulation of an all-embracing and progressive port policy for India:—

- (a) the economic indivisibility of British India and Indian States;
- (b) the increasing requirements of India's rapidly expanding agriculture and industries, as also the desirability of the dispersal of industries;
- (c) the integration and implementation of a comprehensive, well-balanced and efficient policy of transport and its effective development in all its forms;
- (d) the routing of trade through ports not to be influenced by customs policy;
- (e) the need for a long view in the siting of new ports, and the development of existing ones;
- (f) the evolution of a sound policy of Defence for the whole country;
- (g) the geographical position and importance of India in the Indian Ocean; and
- (h) the strategic importance of India in the development of a World Order in the Far East.

The Government of India while noting these views would add that considerations of revenue (customs) should not be overlooked and, before any port is actually constructed or developed, a satisfactory customs agreement should have been reached as a necessary prerequisite.

(2) The Government of India agree that Vizagapatam should be developed as a sheltered deep-sea port to accommodate ships atleast up to 650 feet in length with drafts up to 30 feet, and consider that the works proposed at Vizagapatam should be taken in hand in order of priority to be decided by Government. In reaching this conclusion, which is in agreement with the committee, the Government of India have been influenced by three broad considerations—the needs of ship-building, the employment aspect and the maintenance of a naval base at the port in times of peace.

(3) In this recommendation the committee stated that they felt that the Government may need to investigate the possibility of establishing another sheltered deep-sea port between Vizagapatam and Calcutta in due course. The Government of India note this suggestion but, having regard to the recommendations of the committee which are primarily inspired by the long term needs of the country's rapidly expanding economy, it will be safe to assume that the present planning as a result of the acceptance of the committee's recommendations regarding Vizagapatam and Madras will cover the needs of the foreseeable future.

(4) The Government of India agree that expert opinion on the feasibility of the Calcutta Ship Canal scheme from the engineering, financial and other points of view should first be obtained. They agree at the same time with the committee that they would welcome the fullest and the earliest investigation of the improvements to the navigable approaches to the Port of Calcutta. They note that the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta have already taken steps to obtain preliminary expert opinion on these questions.

(5) The Government of India agree with the recommendation of the committee regarding the vesting in the Madras Port Trust of the prescriptive rights over the land south of the harbour and are taking up with the Madras Government the question of the reservation of the land south of the harbour up to the Cooum for a period of 10 years for port development purposes. Government trust that the Port Trust Board will actively pursue the experiments which

they have been carrying on for the reduction of range in the harbour and that the Board will at an early date elaborate proposals for the construction of a protected wet dock at Madras capable of accommodating at least four large ships.

(6) and (7). These recommendations relate to the Kathiawar ports and the committee suggested that necessary steps should be taken for the execution of a major port scheme at Sika in the State of Jamnagar. The Government of India regard the problems of the development of Kathiawar and Cutch ports and of railway development and of customs policy as closely inter-dependent and have come to the conclusion that the most satisfactory way of tackling these problems would be to convene a general conference between the States concerned and the Central Government after the results of the survey of the rail connection proposed between Badru and Viramgam are known and a decision taken regarding the development of the salt industry after the abolition of the salt duty. The conference is expected to meet in May or June this year.

(8) In this recommendation the committee expressed the opinion that the development of Bhatkal as a major port is essential for providing a good economic outlet for the trade of the large and rich hinterland of Mysore State lying behind it. The Government of India consider that the development of Bhatkal as a major port requires further investigation. In their view the need for a deep-sea port between Mornugno and Cochin and if that need is established on more acceptable grounds, the place where it should be sited, are matters which should be discussed at a preliminary meeting of the representatives of the Governments concerned and if necessary by a small technical committee which might also go into the question of improving the communications with existing ports in that area. Steps are being taken to convene such a meeting as early as possible.

(9) This recommendation runs as follows:—

“As regards the Vizhinjam proposals of the Travancore State, the committee is of opinion that the scheme should be carefully examined after the State has submitted a satisfactory engineering report in connection therewith”.

Any large scale development of a Travancore port would appear to be contrary to the policy regarding the development of Cochin harbour as confirmed by the Cochin Harbour Conference held in 1932. It is proposed to draw the attention of the Government of Travancore to this aspect of the matter and to express the hope that they will consult the Government of India and the Cochin Durbar before proceeding with any such scheme.

(10) The Government of India agree that the Rameswaram canal project is unlikely to prove a practical success from the commercial point of view.

(11) The Government of India agree with the committee that the development of Cocanada into a major port is not likely to be essential in the interest of future trade or necessary for the purpose of defence and strategy, particularly in view of the other developments recommended by the committee to meet the long term requirements of India's expanding economy. Vizagapatam and Cocanada are neighbouring ports less than 100 miles apart and the question whether the development of a port within such close range of an established major port can be justified will have to be borne in mind if and when the need arises to consider the Cocanada project. In the meantime to help future planning the Provincial Government will be requested to maintain beach records of the conditions of sand movement affecting the port in consultation with the Chairman of the Madras Port Trust who will be in a position to give advice on the type of records to be maintained. Without these records Government feel that an engineering survey of the proposal will not yield any useful results. These records will considerably facilitate decision when the time comes in the wake of industrial and other developments to consider the proposal.

(13) and (18). The Government of India have already under consideration the question of the co-ordination of rail and coastal shipping freight rates and the rationalization of traffic between railways and coastal steamers as part of the larger problem of the co-ordination of all forms of transport and have set up a Central Board of Transport to advise Government from time to time on this and similar problems. The Government of India agree with the principles which should govern minor port development as set out by the committee and with their views on the prospects of Bombay minor ports, viz. (i) that trade prospects should be evident before building new channels for them; (ii) that in the case of the Bombay minor ports, the alignment of the B. B. & C. I. Railway along the coast will prohibit any large development of the ports north of Bombay for coastal traffic and (iii) that the prospects of coastal ports south of Bombay are bound up with road development. The improvement of existing or the building of new feeder roads might help to encourage trade in these ports but this is a matter for the Government of Bombay to consider. Subject to the criticisms made by the committee—the particular attention of the Government of Madras will be drawn to the views of the committee on the proposal to dredge a deeper and wider channel from the wharves at the port of Masulipatam to the mouth—the Government of India agree that the schemes of improvement of minor ports framed by the Provincial Governments are suitable and that arrangements should be made to maintain statistics of cargo and passengers passing through these ports.

(14) The Government of India consider that this recommendation should be left over for examination at a future date in the light of constitutional developments.

The Government of India desire to express their appreciation of the services rendered by the Chairman and members of the Ports (Technical) Committee in making a valuable report within a commendably short space of time.

D. D. WARREN,
Secretary.